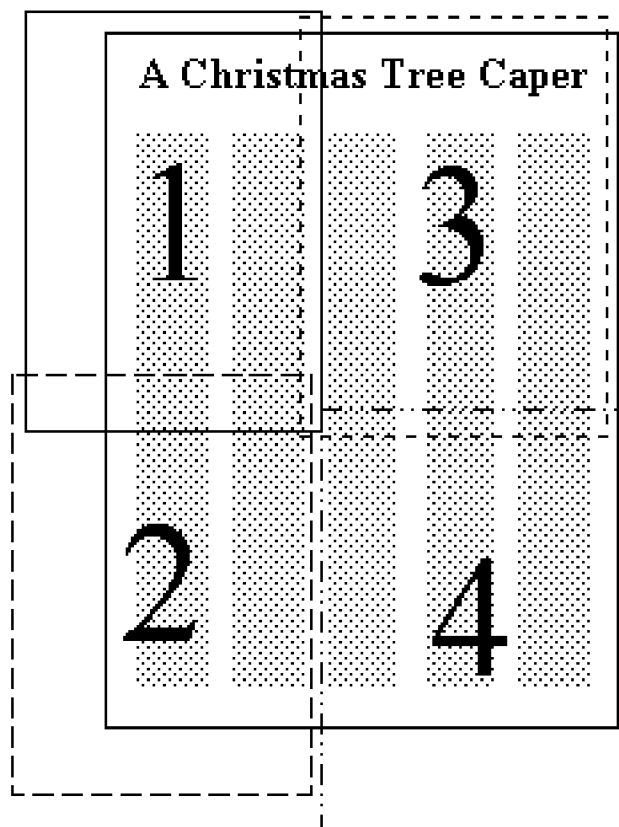


NOTE: This newspaper appearance was divided and enlarged to fill 8 ½" x 11" pages, roughly in the manner shown below.



38 Oh, Give Me A Home

By JACK RITCHIE

"THIS is stark, raving drama," Morrison said. "So pay attention."

I brooded. "I am paying attention."

"Your part has real meat in it," my wife, Diana, said. "If you work hard, darling, who knows, you might get an Emmy nomination."

"I don't want an Emmy. I like life the way it is."

My agent, Morrison, shook his head. "Bill, you can't be a heavy all your life. You've got to stop taking ranches away from widows and shooting people in the back."

Diana patted my head. "Darling, you've been in TV for five years and appeared in 68 Westerns, but nobody even remembers your name."

I practiced rolling a cigarette.

Morrison picked up the new script. "You don't get near a horse in this one. You play the part of a businessman who thinks he's tired of his wife and wants to run away with his secretary."

"I'm the wife," Diana said. "Wise, patient and dewey-eyed. I know that deep down in your boyish heart you really love me."

I grasped a more interesting possibility. "Why don't I actually run away with the secretary?"

"Nobody runs away from me on my program," Diana said firmly. "The audience of 'Diana Presents' is composed principally of wise, patient women whose husbands are tired of them. They'd never stand for it."

"You've got to stop thinking like a villain," Morrison said. "I know it hurts, but you play a sympathetic, if stupid, character."

"There are just three main roles," Diana said. "Yours, mine,

tice at one time?"

"A long time ago," I said non-committally.

"She sells electric ranges on the 'Edison Program,'" Morrison said. "You know, smiles, opens the oven door to show how roomy it is and doesn't look a bit like a homemaker."

I was to be Jeffery Evans, thirtyish, Princeton and an executive in a large corporation. My wife, Geraldine, was late twenties and Radcliffe. We had two sedans, a station wagon, a cook, a maid, a \$50,000-dollar, ranch-style mortgage, and we had been married 10 years. My secretary, Mitzi, was middle twenties and business college.

Some of that fit Diana and me, except that I was Kansas State, Diana West Division High in Milwaukee, and we'd been married five years.

Diana and I arrived at the studio at 8 the next morning for a reading rehearsal and found Irene Prentice doing last-minute studying of her script.

She looked up. "I've never done a dramatic part before. Just commercials. I'm quite happy selling ovens, but my agent has ambitions for me. I also handle Leonetti's Salad Dressing and Wilson Nylons."

Of course, I thought. Nylons.

The reading went fairly smoothly. The last scene took place in a quiet restaurant where my secretary and I were making plans to depart on the morning plane.

"Bill. I want you to look basically unhappy and confused," Diana said, "because you don't really want to leave with your secretary; you just think you do. And then suddenly across the room you see your wife enter the restaurant. She knows what the two of you are up to. She's put all this together by instinct and woman's intuition. She has come to fight for the one she loves."

SHORT STORY



"As Bill was lea

course, found me rising from the table and following my wife back into a far better domestic world.

We rehearsed the next two days, too, and on Friday I took a nap before Diana and I went to the studio for the program. There was a great deal of what I thought was unnecessary hustle and bustle, but it seemed to make everybody happy.

At 8:30 there was silence, the theme music began, and 'Diana Presents' was under way. As usual, Diana was superb. Irene occasionally appeared to be modelling nylons, and I went through all with great courage.

We moved inevitably to the last scene. Diana and Irene discussed their claims on me, I listened, and then I rose and took my wife's hand.

It remained only for us to walk off camera, misty-eyed and radiantly happy.

"Just a minute," Irene said.

That was not in the script.

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"There are just three main roles," Diana said. "Yours, mine, and the secretary's."

"Irene Prentice plays the part of the secretary," Morrison said.

I sat up.

"A shallow creature, really," Diana said. "The secretary, I mean." Her violet eyes passed over me not quite casually. "Didn't you know Irene Pren-

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That seemed an overstatement to me. "All she does is sit down at our table and talk. We need more action."

Diana took a deep breath. "That is the civilized un-Western way of dealing with stormy emotions. People in our income group do not believe in action."

The conclusion of the play, of

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That wasn't in the script, either, and neither was what followed.

"How long have you been married?" Irene demanded.

"Five years," I said. Then I remembered my part. "I mean 10."

"And how many children?"

What in the world was there for me to say? I cleared my throat and looked about desperately. "Well, we have a kidney-shaped swimming pool to pay for first."

"And then?"

"A yacht," Diana said. "He absolutely insists on a yacht. He was born in Kansas."

Why didn't the director do something? He seemed absorbed in drinking a cup of coffee.

"And probably your wife can't cook," Irene said. "I happen to be an expert."

I ran a finger around my collar. "The only thing you ever cooked for me was spaghetti and I never did get around to eating it until after midnight."

Diana's eyes widened.

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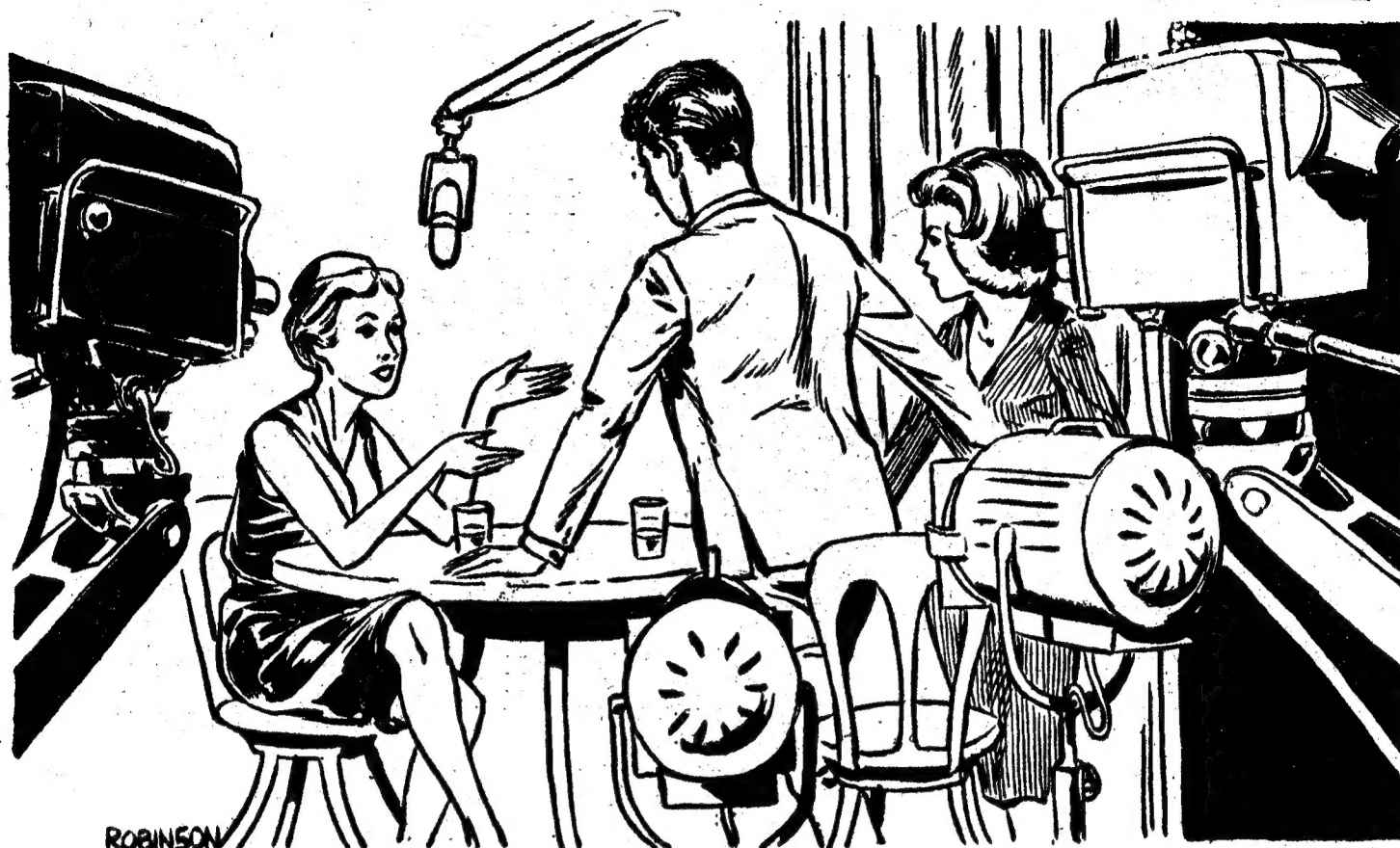
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SHORT STORY COMPLETE ON PAGE



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melt." Somehow I felt that needed further explanation. "I mean that she forgot to thaw out the hamburgers for the meat balls and I kept getting hungrier and hungrier all the time."

"Now if you married me," Irene said. "We'd probably have twins. Twins run in my family."

I had a brilliant inspiration. I smiled quickly at the camera. "And now, ladies and gentlemen, a word from our sponsor."

But no commercial appeared and my smile became painful. Was everyone insane?

"Do you know what?" Irene said. "I think you're immature."

That was patently ridiculous.

She pursued the subject relentlessly. "You just want to go on living life as it is. You can't enjoy yourself all the time. Sooner or later you've got to assume the responsibilities and expectations of marriage."

Why couldn't I faint?

"All in all, though," Irene said. "I think you'd do much better if you married me."

done to the studio clocks. We don't go on the network for another half an hour."

"You played your part superbly," Irene said. "Especially that last scene. So lifelike. Just as though you meant every word."

I walked away from them and sat down.

Diana came to me and put a hand on my shoulder. "It was just a joke."

Why didn't people just leave me alone?

Her voice became uncertain. "It was innocent fun."

I may have been humiliated and confused, but I knew better.

She stroked my head. "Well, we have been married five years . . . and I go to work . . . and you go to work . . . and we hardly see each other, and the house rattles with emptiness and couldn't you get a rowboat instead of a yacht?"

The trouble with me is that I can remain angry just so long. Then my mature intelligence and my mature sense of humor take over.

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"All in all, though," Irene said. "I think you'd do much better if you married me."

Diana's face was thoughtful. "You might have something there."

That was too much!

"Look, Diana or Geraldine," I said. "If you want to be a homemaker, I'll fire the cook and the maid."

"Well, now," Diana said. "I wouldn't go that far. But have you changed your mind on the subject of children?"

I could see my yacht going. "All right. We'll have as many as you like. Say when."

At that point both Irene and Diana giggled.

A horrible suspicion entered my mind and I glanced at my watch.

Diana grinned. "I put it ahead an hour while you were napping. I ordered the same thing

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The trouble with me is that I can remain angry just so long. Then my mature intelligence and my mature sense of humor take over.

A-half an hour later the program went off without a hitch and according to the written script.

I have since discovered that twins do not run in our family. They crawl.

I have a rowboat too.

Aussie Netter Wins

BROUMMANA, Lebanon Aug. 17 (AP).—Roy Emerson of Australia disposed of Britain's ace Bill Knight in straight sets 6-3, 6-2, 6-3 today in the semifinals of the Broummana international tennis tournament. South Africa's Gordon Forbes defeated Britain's Mike Sangster 4-6, 7-5, 6-3, 9-7, in the other.

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**TODAY'S
GIANT
PUZZLE
IS
ON
PAGE
46**

